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WAR SUFFERERS'
RELIEF BULLETIN

"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister"

April, 1946 — Vol. II, No. 2

Entering Belgium

(In the fall of 1945 the Mennonite Relief Committee sent its chairman, John L. Horst, to Europe as a special commissioner to investigate possible relief needs in Belgium. As a result of these investigations three brethren, Cleo Mann, Paul Peachey, and Wilson Hunsberger, have been sent to Belgium to initiate a relief project there. The following articles describe the conditions in Belgium as seen by the three relief workers.)

Perhaps you have been asking, "What word from Belgium?" Since our arrival in Brussels, contacts have been made with the persons and the work which Bro. Horst visited on his investigation of the needs of Belgium. Our days have been occupied with further investigations of the areas of greatest need to determine how the needy families can be located and distribution of relief supplies made to them. Along with this there has been the task of locating a warehouse for our supplies, lodging for the workers, and means of transportation of both the supplies and the workers.

Belgium is recovering quite rapidly and one often hears from America that there is no need here. Perhaps, comparatively speaking, there is not as much need as in some other countries. Yet last week in Liege we were told that about 6,500 persons look to the Ministry of Public Assistance for aid. Many of these are old people and others who do not have sufficient income to buy the necessary things of life. One public health team which visits from home to home in the region southeast of Liege and another team in the Province of Luxembourg report that many persons do not have enough clothing to put on clean clothes after their treatments. They also find many people among the old and the sick who ought to have special help. It seems the smaller villages and out of the way places have not received as much help as the larger and more accessible communities. Some of these conditions exist because two to four families must live in one home since so many houses have been destroyed. Many buildings in Liege are still without windows and other repairs which might make them living quarters. The damage of property in Liege from V-1 and V-2 bombs is 5.4 per cent per square kilometre as compared to the 3.7 per cent of London. Rations for this period have also been reduced on certain items although not in such drastic measures as appear to be imminent in France and Germany.—Cleo Mann.

First Impressions

On attempting to write my impressions of Belgium after being here for only two weeks, I am reminded of Stephen Leacock who jestingly tells of an English author who arrived at Harvard University in the morning, had lunch with the president, then wrote a whole chapter on the "Excellence of Higher Education in America." Thus, those impressions may be premature and perhaps even inaccurate.

I am impressed by the industry of the Belgian people. At night upon retiring, I still see the housewives scrubbing their steps or pouring the waste water out on the sidewalk. I hear the hawkers shouting their unintelligible advertisements as they peddle fish, flowers, newspapers, and

bric-a-brac along the cobblestone streets. Early in the morning, carts, cars, bicycles, motorcycles, and people on foot create a din which tells you to be up and doing. The Belgian people are busy. Their industry has produced considerable recovery from the results of the recent war. The stores are still stocked with all kinds of consumer goods, with a greater variety than in many parts of America. On a day's visit to Brussels one would wonder if there is a need here.

There is a need, but it is deep-rooted—under the surface veneer of full shop windows. In many cases prices are so high that clothing cannot be bought. In Liege, where much damage was done by flying bombs in 1944-45, many people lost all their possessions and are wearing the only clothes they own. The prices of food are likewise very high. The situation can be realized by the great number of people who stop to stare at the appetizing display of pastries in the ever present "patisseries." They invariably look and then walk away.—Wilson Hunsberger.

At present I am trying to synthesize from my preconceived ideas about Europe, from my first impressions, and from my subsequent discoveries, an accurate conception of conditions here. The short visit which Wilson and I were permitted to make to England and to Holland has been helpful in this. A friendly Belgian aboard our ship almost made us feel that our coming was useless. "Belgium is getting along fine," he said, although we had to feel that perchance his opinion was influenced by the comfortable salary he was drawing from MGM in Hollywood. But whatever may be the relative position of Belgium in Europe's needs, or whatever may be the surface appearance, in her hard-hit areas there are still many serious needs. In Liege last week we learned that 1600 "buzz" bombs fell on the city in a ten-month's period, ending in February, 1945. The stories one hears of those days are saddening indeed. We hope that we can be of assistance here in helping to bind up these wounds, even though our contribution will be comparatively small, for all that we can do. People have been friendly and interested in our project.

We have met the people, and have learned of some of the needs. Naturally we are eager to begin our distribution. We hope it won't be long.—Paul Peachey.

Notes from the Field

New Clothing Center in France

You will now find us busily engaged in the first floor basement of a large apartment house which was made available to us at a very reasonable rate. The spacious, tile-floored, well-lighted room, so placed that we have the sun all day long, adds to the thrill of opening bales of clothing sent by friends from the States and Canada. It is gratifying to note the expressions of joy on the faces of those who come for help, not having been able to get clothing for five years. The children's homes have had their work greatly facilitated by receiving clothing, bedding, shoes, and soap from our clothing center. Several homes for abandoned children in Chalon and the city hospital have applied for clothing and will be supplied after the preliminary check-up has been finished.—Mrs. M. C. Lehman.

From Ethiopia

This time of the year the weather is still dry and quite windy, thus making Nazareth a very dusty place. Fortunately, however, our compound of buildings is on the northeast corner of town, and since the wind always comes from the northeast we don't get dust. We expect the rains to start coming a little during the months of April and May when we'll have no more wind and things will start to get green all about again. When the rains start coming, planting of vegetables can begin so that during and after the rainy season which ends about September 30 we should be able to grow almost enough vegetables to last until they can be grown again.—Paul Ervin Hooley.

Clothing Arrives in Italy

The big news for the month is that the long-awaited eight tons of clothing have finally arrived. The clothing is in excellent shape; it seems to have been kept dry all the time and as far as I know there was absolutely no spoilage . . . . We are distributing some shoes in an Italian Children's Home for the Blind. At the present time these children are in a terrible condition and I am told that actually some of them have so little clothing that they must remain in bed or go naked. Rest assured that the clothing is duly appreciated and is a godsend to many, many in this area.—D. Kirchhofer.

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Thinking about Relief

Essential in the Christian's testimony of love and peace is service to his fellow men. Each is dependent on and enriched by the other. Either one alone fails to accomplish the great amount of good for which they have the potential. It is only when the deed of mercy is done out of love and compassion that the highest service is realized. Likewise a testimony of love and peace must be accompanied by some program of service to be valid.

We recall the story of Sir Launfal as he went out on his mission to find the Holy Grail, the cup from which our Lord drank when He instituted the Communion. Upon leaving the castle he noticed by the gate a beggar with his hand outstretched for alms; as he rode by he tossed him a coin and haughtily rode on his way. The poet, James Russell Lowell, observes that the beggar raised not the gold from the dust; better to him the poor man's crust. Long afterward when Sir Launfal returned from his vain quest, he came upon the same beggar sitting at the gate of the castle. Dismounting from his horse he gave the poor man his last morsel of bread, whereupon Sir Launfal hears these words from Christ, disguised as the beggar: "Not what we give but what we share, for the gift without the giver is bare." All our deeds of mercy and service are enriched a thousand-fold by the proper motive—giving "In the Name of Christ." Letters of appreciation from those who have received gifts of food and clothing almost invariably mention that the spirit in which the things are given make them mean much more. We quote from a letter from the church board of the Mennonite congregation in Haarlem, Holland:

"We know you want no thanks for yourself. You give, and you do all this work in the name of Christ and for His sake. We will receive it in the same spirit. We are sure that your peace work will magnify the love of Christ in this war-stricken world.

"This love may bring the Mennonites all over the world nearer to each other. By the coming of the American Mennonites to Holland, not only personal acquaintance but also spiritual fellowship has arisen. We hope that by all this the American and Dutch Mennonites may come in the future in closer contact with each other.

"Though sundered far, by faith [we] meet
Around one common mercy-seat."

Someone has said that the peace doctrine of the church requires an active relief program. Thousands of our young men have said no to the call to arms and have refused to give service to their country in acts of destruction. This alone is not enough; we must give a POSITIVE witness. And what is more logical in this day than caring for those who have been made to suffer as a result of the recent carnage?

Service

(The following note very nicely summarizes the foregoing thought. It comes to us in the European Relief Notes with no name attached, but is presumably from the pen of Howard Yoder.)

While space forbids an adequate discussion of the meaning of service here, I am prompted to make several observations that are especially pertinent to our relief program. In too many discussions of the relation of service to Christianity, we fail to recognize the nature of service. Service is not an end or a commodity that can be measured, tested, and evaluated. Rather it is a vessel that can be used to carry either dross or precious ointment. Neither is it a means or a ladder by which we attain spiritual merit, but rather the fruit of a spiritual fertilization. It is neither superior nor inferior to evangelism (preaching) because the value of either depends on content. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians classes both with faith and intelligence as without value unless activated by love.

Our relief program, and this is true of our missionary program as well, can enrich the church only if our reason for carrying it on is based on love for the people we touch. A relief worker in Europe or China can have as shriveled a soul as the coldest church member in America. Even "if we give all we have and our bodies to be burned," Paul says, "and have not love, it profiteth us nothing."

Again the harvest which we as a church will reap from our relief program will depend on our attitude to those who receive the goods we provide. "The bitter bread of charity" nourishes hate rather than love. Only that which is truly shared binds together the sharers. An attitude of condescension and superiority will vitiate any service effort.

Culinary Arts as a Part of French Relief Work

By Charlotte L. Regier

"Twenty minutes 'till breakfast," rings out the voice from the kitchen. The day has begun by now for the family at the Chalon Centre. We are told that cooking is an art—I have experienced it to be doubly so after being cook at the Chalon Centre since my arrival in France three months ago.

A two and one-half burner gas stove in one little kitchen and a **small** range with a **small** oven in another little kitchen do the work for six or eight and up to eighteen persons. Yes, it is great sport to actually pour the proverbial water into the soup and add a little thickening (that is if you have it), when the one responsible has forgotten to announce to the cook until the last minute "Three extra for dinner." Did you ever know that the best and creamiest cottage cheese is made by holding the bowl under the water faucet with its cool, clear stream pouring forth lavishly and then all you do is to beat it up well! It is delicious! Ask those who ate it. But don't tell the folks here at Chalon; it's a kitchen secret.

Then come days when there are no noodles, no macaroni, no potatoes, nothing to give base to a meal. "Yes, I've scoured the market, the stores, and there is practically no cheese any more. And what could I have for dessert?" My mind seems to be a complete blank today. And I, who at home at times was almost accused of being a slave to recipes, have none in sight. "I've got it! I just received the recipe my sister sent. I'll have biscuits with gravy," and I proceed, but when they come out of the oven they are very nearly the same size as when they went in. However, to my surprise they do somewhat resemble the ones we used to eat at home and they are really edible. Not having thought of the dessert in time, I remember I splurged the other day and made some cookies. However, being made of bread crumbs, a bit of egg powder, peanut butter and honey with a bit of rolled oats and a tiny amount of flour that lacks quite evidently in thickening power, they hardly hang together. The cookies resembled so much my little brown biscuit humps that suddenly I find myself calling out to the other end of the table at dinner, "That isn't to be eaten with gravy; that is the dessert!" Chagrined, the offender releases her hold and we still have a dessert. Pudding too makes a good dessert, so I look over my supplies, haul out milk powder, sugar, some powdery flour which is not too satisfactory—all these ingredients mixed and water added and cooked we call pudding. The flour is such that when the product is done it spins threads almost like taffy. The last minute I recall that I still have peeling of **four** oranges, a reminder of a special ration due to the "age of childhood not completed" of my kitchen helper. These four oranges had been served Sunday night to thirteen persons as a special treat. Chopped up fine, these peelings add much to the flavor of the "taffy-pudding."

What a thrill, for tomorrow I still have a large piece of meat, yes, each one shall have a slab of roast beef, 1 1-2 by 3 1-2 inches. And what a treat for supper; I shall use the eight eggs the Bullers brought from the Alsatian Mennonite home where the Directors' Conference had taken place. Deviled eggs will fill the bill; it will take seven for thirteen folks, a half extra, which still leaves one whole egg to make an honest to goodness pudding in a few days . . . with fluffy egg-white.

Weary but happy I may retire, for my family, small or large, has been fed again for another day.

Good Witness in France

Emerging in France is a good MCC relief program. It is not a spectacular soup-kitchen type of relief where crusts of bread are handed to the starving and garments distributed to the naked. France's economic recovery is slowly occurring. To an untrained eye there is no apparent acute suffering, except perhaps among persecuted prisoner-of-war groups. Although the hour of emergency in France is past, there are yet those many dark corners of need where we can serve. There may not be starvation in France but there is widespread malnutrition. Tuberculosis is prevalent, indicative of malnutrition and exposure. We all need discerning eyes to keep alert to the areas of need. As we seek to make our maximum contribution in France, perhaps our major limitation is our inability to speak with fluency the French. We are eager that our program have a distinct Christian witness.—Robert Kreider.

Echoes from America's India

Tuberculosis in Puerto Rico

No word strikes fear into the heart of the Puerto Rican like the word "tuberculosis." Compared to this dreaded disease, syphilis, typhoid, or even cancer are considered as Monday morning headaches. The very word is enough to scare people away from the clinic, and the suggestion that they might have contracted the disease is said to have been cause for suicide.

It is not without basis that this fear exists. With the exception of the typhoid-dysentery group, tuberculosis kills more people in Puerto Rico than any other disease, and—what is far more tragic—takes its largest toll from people who have not yet reached the prime of life. The disease is usually not discovered until it is well advanced and, because of the difficulty of securing proper treatment, results in almost certain death. With a few exceptions, sanatoriums are poorly-equipped, understaffed, and offer to the patient who enters little hope of ever coming out alive. The total number of sanitorium beds on the whole island does not exceed 1500 while the known active cases number 10,000, with perhaps several times this many which have never been diagnosed.

During the latter part of January the mobile X-ray unit of the Insular Department of Health was stationed at La Plata and took 750 chest plates, about half of school children and half of adults of the community selected on the basis of positive tuberculosis tests or of contact with known active cases. From that effort, 16 new cases were discovered, largely early or minimal tuberculosis, bringing to about 95 the number of cases for which our clinics are responsible. What have we to offer to these people? To date we have been successful in placing only seven or eight of them in sanatoriums.

The answer to the problem lies in two directions: (1) more sanatoriums, and (2) better living conditions. Much has been done along both these lines by the Insular and Federal Government, but the size of the problem is such that it is only a start. In our hospital we have not had the resources to attack the situation here in our valley as we would have liked. In the future we hope to do better.—Richard Weaver.

The Community Building Program

The community building program consists of four types of service rendered by six continental workers. These types of service are: community recreation, community education, school health service, and child feeding program. The community recreational service is in charge of two full-time workers, James Hean and Oswald Goering. The community education work consists of a visual education program, the community paper (**El Heraldo de La Plata**), and a community library. This work is under the direction of Justus Holsinger and Delos Tanner. The community paper is a Spanish sixteen-page paper published monthly with a 500-copy circulation in four PRRA rural communities. One section of the paper is devoted to educational articles on health, agriculture, home improvement, etc. The community library has recently been organized, and approximately 300 volumes of books and a daily paper and weekly magazine are made available for reading. Many of the people enjoy reading while very few if any homes have any reading materials for the family.

The school health service is conducted by Edna Peters, RN, who devotes full time to the supervision of the health of the school children of the Aibonito Municipality. Her work consists of physical examinations of children referred to her by the teachers, personal conferences with the children, immunization of children, remedial work for children with complaints, and the promotion of an anti-tuberculosis campaign.

The child feeding program is under the direction and supervision of Sister Mary Lauver. This work centers around the community milk station where two separate feeding programs are carried on under her supervision. One station is financed entirely by the M.C.C. while the other is financed by the Department of Public Welfare. The M.C.C. station sends milk to approximately forty small children under two years of age from poor homes who have no family milk supply. Approximately thirty-five children attend the other station where they are served with a well-prepared hot breakfast.—Justus Holsinger (Condensed from **Rio La Plata**).

Thanksgiving at Roverestein

By Evangeline Matthies

(Roverestein is a large house in Holland where about two hundred Mennonite refugees are living as they await a permanent refuge. Two MCC workers, Siegfried Janzen and Evangeline Matthies are serving there at the present.)

A spirit of excitement wended its way into every room of our home. Thankfulness and appreciation, welling up out of the hearts of these people, sought an outlet for expression. What could be more fitting than to choose a day of Thanksgiving to God? In the first place for His mysterious and wonderful leading, and then for material help in food and clothing coming from their brethren and sisters in America.

Throughout the week preparations were apparent everywhere. The children in the kindergarten practiced for their parts in the day of thanksgiving. The untiring efforts of the choir too showed marked results. Fingers busily altered and remade the newly distributed clothing to suit the individual as with pleasure they looked forward to wearing the "new" suit or dress for the first time. Floors were usually scrubbed daily but this time the windows and walls must undergo a special cleaning process. The large front hall was made festive with green branches and bouquets of flowers.

A feeling of expectancy and gladness was noted already Sunday morning as all our people gathered for our regular Sunday service in the hall. Bro. Janzen's morning message on "How can we Acquire True Thankfulness," gave the keynote for the services to follow.

In early afternoon our guests began to assemble. A silence fell over the group while the strains of "Nearer My God to Thee" flowed from the organ. The opening song by the choir, "Gott Gruesse Dich" resounded in the large hall. But not only was thankfulness noted among the adults, the children too gave expression of what was in their hearts when they joyfully sang, "Lobt Froh Den Herrn," and gave some beautiful renderings of the same thought in verse. To this was added a challenge to all by Peter Dyck, who, after touching on the main trend of thought for the day, finished with a true story of one, Jimmy, who "stood by" in spite of very trying conditions when left alone in the frozen wastes of northern Canada. His strong determination to make good won for him a place of respect and honor.

During the intermission lunch was served. We also seized upon this opportunity to celebrate Freda Dyck's birthday. A bouquet of flowers was presented to her, with fitting verses, by one of the little boys in behalf of all the inhabitants of Roverestein. Then after some messages in song our program continued in further expressions of gratitude towards God. Following verse and song a bit of Holland was brought in when two little children in "Klompen" and Dutch dress acted out a little song.

We were very happy to have Sam Goering and family with us for this significant day. Brother Goering gave a short message on John 3:16 which was very appropriate. Dr. Hylkema's favorite hymn, "Ik Voel de Winden Gods Vandaag," was sung by the choir after which he too addressed a few words to the congregation. A poem composed by one of those present, telling of his life experiences was well rendered. The sincere spirit in which our people worship and their response and gratitude to all that is being done for them was most touching to behold for us who have enjoyed religious freedom for so long.

All too soon time bade the end to come. With all their heart those present joined in further consecration in singing the beloved hymn:

"Nimm Jesu meine Haende und fuehre mich,
Bis an mein selig Ende, und ewiglich;
Ich kann allein nicht gehen, nicht einen Schritt,
Wo du willst geh'n und stehen da nimm mich mit."

Peace Notes

Extension of Selective Service

The various military elements of the nation are determined to establish some program of military training for the United States. Opposition to permanent peacetime conscription has been so strong that the passing of such a bill is not very likely at present.

In view of this these groups who favor military training have shifted their pressure to the extension or continuation of the present Selective Service and Training Act. They hope that this will temporarily encourage military preparation, and that at a later date the attitude toward permanent conscription will be more favorable. In the Senate Military Affairs Committee the move to extend the present draft for one year was defeated by only one vote on March 29. The House Military Affairs Committee has reported out a bill which provides for a nine month extension of the draft with exemptions for fathers and farm laborers; the bill also stipulates a maximum of eighteen months of service. At the time of writing it appears very likely that the draft will be extended from six weeks to a year with a concurrent special program of voluntary enlistment.

Has Christianity Failed?

"The failure of Christianity as a civilizing force of society is an incalculable tragedy.

"Two thousand years is time enough to judge the efficacy of a method, no matter how valuable the doctrine. During these twenty centuries, it has seemed at times that Christianity had at last succeeded in taming the beast in man, in controlling and directing destructive human impulses and characteristics.

"But since the Christian churches have deviated from their universal mission and and have evolved into national organizations supporting the pagan, tribal instincts of nationalism everywhere, we see how weak was the hold of Christianity upon the Western World. For worldly interests they have abandoned their moral teachings and have capitulated before the volcanic instincts of men, who are bound to destroy each other unless restricted by law."—Emery Reves, **The Anatomy of Peace.**

Has Christianity really failed? Can it be said that the materialism, destruction, and hatred prevalent in our world today are proof that Christianity has been of no avail? Certainly not altogether. Indeed, there are Christian groups and individuals who nobly oppose the overwhelming current of materialism which has been rampant. These, though they be few, are standing firm in their cause, determined more than ever that the basic need of the world is for the Gospel of Christ.

And yet, to think of what might have been done to promote the Gospel of Peace! How much more time and talent and means should have been dedicated to this most urgent cause! Is not this a tragic failure? Is not this a sin of omission? Our light has too long been confined by bushels of negligence, lack of vision, and selfishness. Our interests have been narrow and self-centered. Thus Christianity **has** failed insofar as we ourselves have failed to place these first things first.

We are admonished to set our spiritual cities on the hill where they cannot be hidden, but will shine forth. We are challenged to awake—to arise from sleep —to redeem the time.

Menno Simons on Peace

"My dear reader, if the poor ignorant world with an honest heart accepted this our hated and despised doctrine, which is not of us but of Christ, and faithfully obeyed it, they could well change their deadly swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks, level their gates and walls, dismiss their executioners and henchmen. For all who accept our doctrine in its power, will by God's grace not have any ill will to any one on earth, and not against their most bitter enemies, much less wrong and harm them by deeds and actions; for they are children of the Most High who from their heart love that which is good and in their weakness avoid that which is evil; nay, hate it and are enemies thereto."—Menno Simons (taken from **Menno Simons Life and Writings,** by Bender and Horsch.)

Our United States expenditures for war purposes this past year (1945), some $75,000,000,000, would support all our American churches on the basis of their present budgets for the next one hundred and fifty years.

Give Us Vision, God

By Stanley Shenk

Give us vision, God.

Help us to see just a portion of that which cannot be seen—the multiplied sorrow of Europe.

Show us just a single village, blasted and torn, wrecked and gutted by the brutal, frightful, screaming, shattering fury of war.

Show us the people who wander dumbly and dazed through scenes once familiar, now hideously strange.

Show us the mothers whose sons have never returned, whose husbands are—God only knows where—and whose daughters move white-lipped and shocked amid the ruins.

Show us the rows of crosses, not alone of dead warriors, but of dead children.

Then, too, turn back for us the wheel of Time, and let us see a picture of frightened children cowering by trembling but upright mothers as the black cylinders plummeted earthward in the night.

Show us, God, the iniquity of our nation in callously murmuring, "military necessity," and then forgetting such things.

Show us as individual Christians the isolation, the heedlessness, the vague, indirect selfishness of our own minds.

Knock us, O God, out of our complacency in relation to human agony.

Show us, God, "the least of these," "the poor," the "hungry," the "sick," the "naked."

Show us how to paraphrase "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem" for our day.

Storm, O God, our pocketbooks with the convicting power of Thy Spirit.

Give us vision, God.